

An
Inaugural Essay
on

Menstruation

and its Irregularities.

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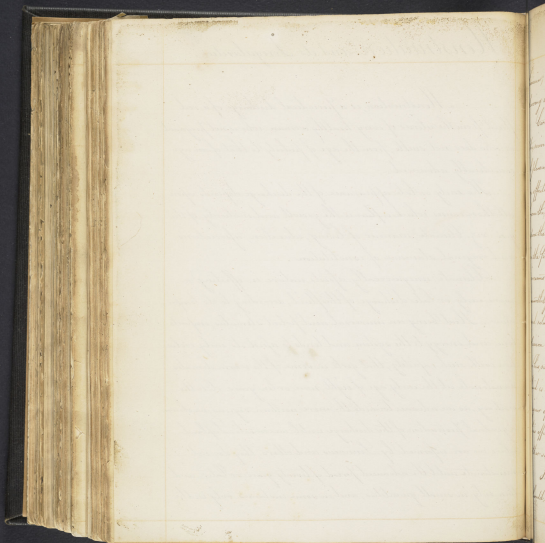
Richardson

On
Menstruation and its Irregularities.

Menstruation, is a periodical discharge of a red fluid from the uterus of every healthy woman, who is not pregnant, or who does not suckle, from the age of puberty to that of an age considerably advanced.

The early or late appearance of the discharge depends upon all those causes which influence the growth and maturity of the girl, viz. Climate, manner of living, education, affections and original stamina of constitution.

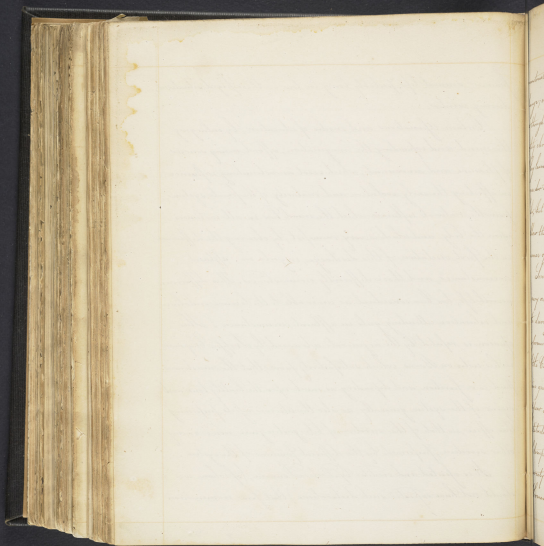
Climate, unequivocally assists nature in effecting a more early or late discharge of this fluid, according to its temperature. Heat being an universal and potent stimulus, imparts tone and energy to the system and tends to assist its early evolution with such rapidity, that girls in some of the warm climates menstruate at the early age of eight, nine, or ten years. On the contrary, as we advance towards the more northern regions we observe a gradual protraction of the discharge until we come to England, where we are informed by Serapion and others, they do not menstruate until the advanced period of twenty years, or later, and then only in small quantities, and in some instances only in the



Summer; animal life, probably being too low in those frigid situations, during winter.

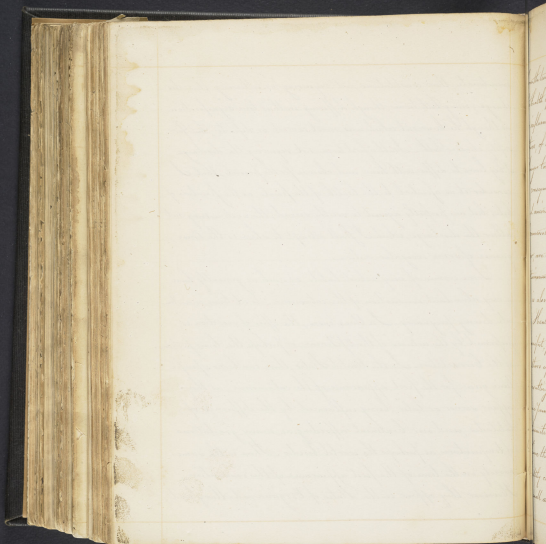
Certain occupations and modes of education, by enlarging the mind and expanding the imagination, afford many sources of pleasure and amusement, which exert an astonishing influence in effecting the early evolution and maturity of the female system, from the natural influence which the mind has in all instances upon the body, and which is very manifest, by observing the difference in the first visitation of this discharge, in girls in affluent circumstances, and those differently circumstanced. This difference, nevertheless, has been considered as convenient to the leisure, indolence, and relaxation attending girls in affluent circumstances. This opinion is refuted by the arguments advanced by Proffor Chapman in his notes on Burns, which satisfactorily prove, that the menstrual fluid is a secretion, and depending as much upon the healthy tone and vigour of the system generally, as also the uterine vessels performing this office, as that of the secretion of bile, gastric juice, urine or any other secretion, performed by the different functions of the system.

It is asserted and availed by Doctor Ferriman, (of whom we should not have expected such declarations) that some women men-



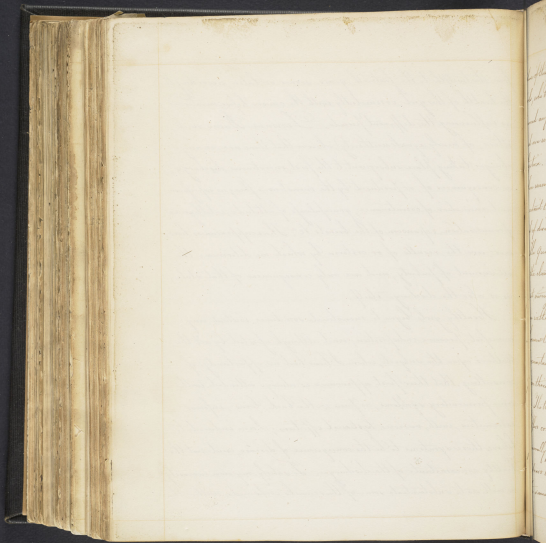
menstruate, their constitutions not requiring or allowing this discharge; using both terms, though differing in their true signification, as though he knew not which was most correct or definite, but for safety chooses both. In the first term, not requiring the discharge, they leave to differ with him, and observe for the present, that I consider it as essential to the health of the female, as the secretion of bile; but am perfectly agreed to use the second, the system may not allow the discharge, which I shall attempt to show is the consequence of some irregular action.

Some women of very robust habits, or such as generally have a very abundant evacuation of the catamenia, do at times menstruate during pregnancy. In these cases, the office of secretion is performed by the arteries of the Os Pueri, or perhaps the lower portion of the Cervix Uteri. In the United States, there can be no specific time given for the first appearance of the catamenia, as they appear sooner or later, being influenced by the difference of latitudes, and our Continent affording as many gradations of temperature, as perhaps the world besides. There is the same variety in the time of the first appearance of this evacuation. However, they appear in the States of Virginia and Maryland,



from the twelfth to the sixteenth years, sooner or later, according to the health of the girl, connectedly with the causes before mentioned as influencing the different periods. Lennox Burns and others, of nearly equal authority, observe that there are many changes taking place subsequent to the first menstruous discharge, as consequences of, or produced by the menstruous flux, as improvement, and animation of countenance, gracefulness of attitude, intelligence of conversation, expansion of the breasts &c. These appearances however, are the results of or criteria by which we determine the attainment of puberty, and are only consequences of that state, as is also the discharge itself.

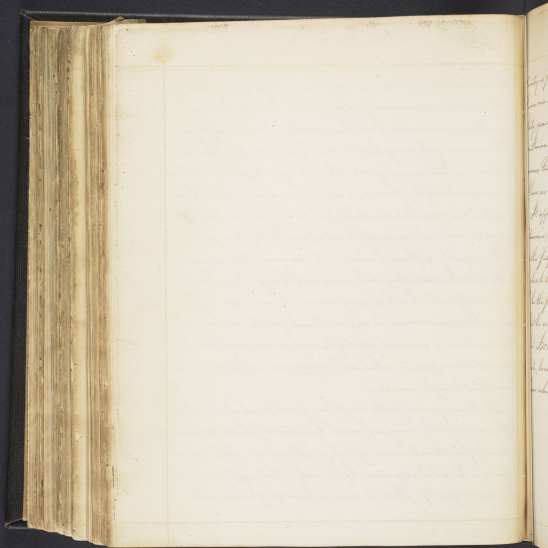
Healthy girls begin to menstruate sometimes without any manifest previous indisposition; and although asserted by all the Authors upon the subject, whom I have had an opportunity of consulting, that their first appearance is always attended with some premonitory symptoms, as pain in the back, loins, inferior extremities, with various hysterical affections; I am induced to believe these symptoms to be the consequences of disease, and not the healthy concomitants of the discharge. To satisfy my own curiosity, as well as to substantiate some of the remarks contained within the



of these papers, I have made frequent enquiry of many healthy girls, who have unreservedly informed me, that they never experienced any pains in the back, loins or otherwise at those periods, and are uniformly very cheerful, and by no means disposed to Hypochondria. Nature, in my estimation, being adequate at all times when unobscured by disease, to execute her designs, it is absurd to admit the idea, that she should find it expedient to call in the aid of disease, to the accomplishment of any healthy process.

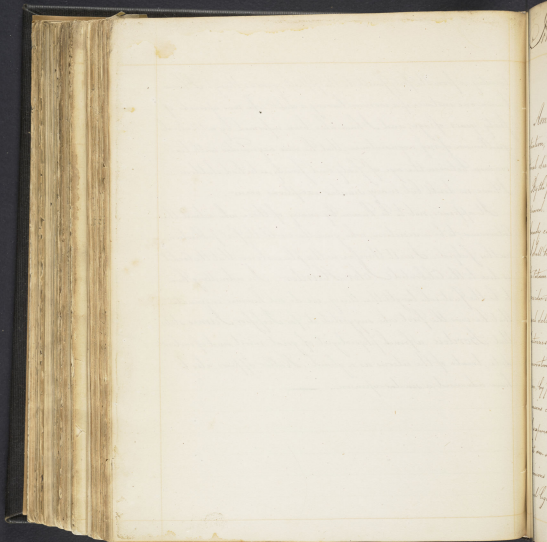
The quantity of fluid discharged at each evacuation, is regulated by the climate, constitution and manner of living; hence from the great variety in the health of young women, it varies exceedingly even in the same woman, at different periods, from the same causes. However there is an usual quantity to which women, under similar circumstances, approach, which in Virginia and Maryland is from three to eight ounces.

The time required for the completion of each period of evacuation, differs considerably, being influenced by a variety of circumstances; generally from three to six or eight days. The cessation of the menses appears to be ruled very much by the early or late appearance of the same originally. But the common time of cessation in this



Country is from the forty fourth to the fifty fifth years: though I have known one instance of a woman having a child, who was upwards of sixty years of age, and I have also been informed by a Medical gentleman of my acquaintance, that he was acquainted with two women between the age of sixty and seventy, who had children. I have no doubt but many similar exceptions occur.

It appears not to be known by many of those who admit the Catamenia, to be a secretion, who, gave the world the first publication on this subject. I will therefore in this place observe that the credit is due to the celebrated John Hunter. In admitting him to be the first who taught this theory, we do not however insinuate that he was the first who suggested it, for Professor Störmer states that Bordeu a French physiologist of great merit and of earlier date, treats of the uterus as a gland. Haller appears also to have advanced a similar opinion.



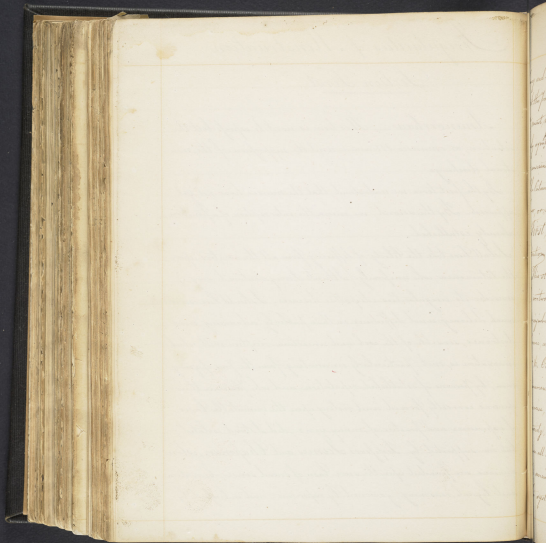
Irregularities of Menstruation

Section First

Amenorrhœa — This term is used to express both the retention, or emansio *Menstruum* and the suppression of the menstrual discharge.

By the first term we understand, that the menses have not yet appeared. By the second, we mean the interruption of a function already established.

I shall here take the liberty of differing from all the writers upon the Catamenia, who uniformly (I think I may venture to say) consider its irregularities idiopathic diseases. I should here exercise much delicacy and diffidence in thus publicly advancing new doctrines, sensible of the cool and uncertain reception with which innovation is met, particularly innovating from the pens of young men, by persons of established reputation, and who procure their opinions correctly formed and resting upon the immutable bases of experience and practice of many years, did I stand isolated; but am supported by Truffaut, Linnæus and Chaponnier, whose opinions are founded upon the sure base of sound sense, observation, and logical reasoning, governed by experience, and unbiassed by

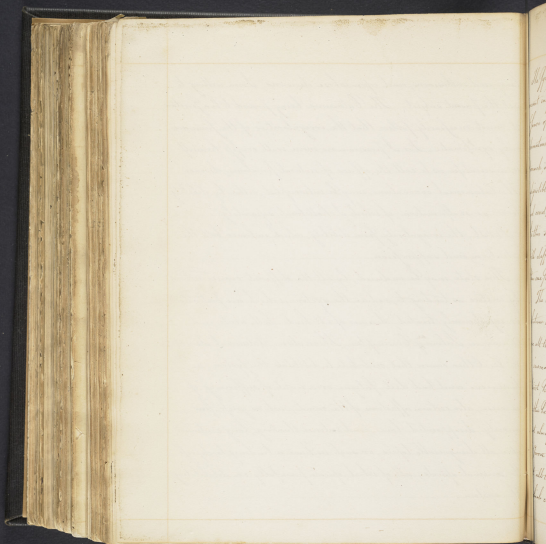


zeal and enthusiasm, and upon whose decisions, I am willing to
risk the present subject. The Catamenia being proved to be a function,
it must necessarily follow that the irregularities of the same are
only symptomatic. For I presume no man will creep himself
so unscientific as to call the offices of natural functions, disease.

The Catamenial evacuations may be interrupted, either by debility,
fever, or malformation, of which I shall treat separately.

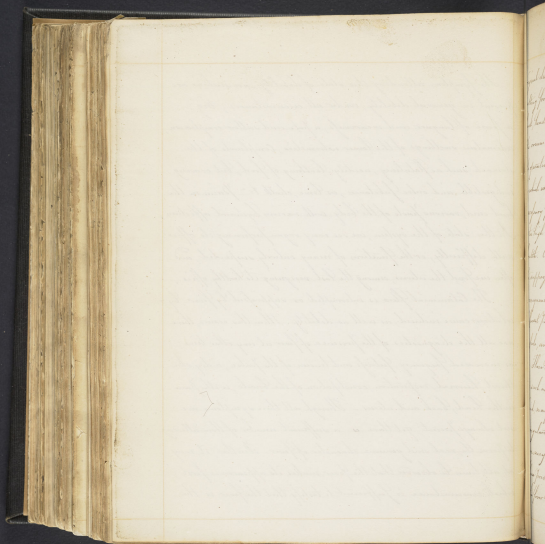
First, the irregularity from debility, which embraces both the
retention and suppression.

This state may be induced, by all the different causes noticed
by writers as tending to reduce the system, which are protracted
or injudiciously treated; diseases of all kinds, both acute and
chronic, as Pulmonary Consumption, Rheumatism, Actinical Fever
&c. &c. Other causes that contribute to debilitate the system, as
prolonged and bad diet, fatigue or a want of sufficiency of
exercise, also certain affections of the mind, such as grief, fear,
anxiety, disappointed love, and intense thinking long continued,
upon all disagreeable topics, or such as have a tendency to depress
the animal spirits; all of which operate powerfully on debilitating
the system.



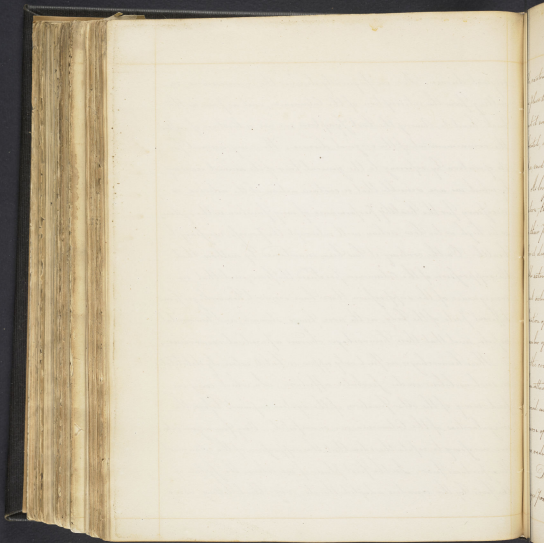
The Symptoms attending this state of debility, are such as are present in general debility, under all circumstances, viz, a sense of languor and weariness, a pale and sallow complexion, oedematous swellings of the lower extremities, Complaints of the stomach, such as flatulency, acidity, loathing of food, but craving indigestible and crude Substances, as Lime, chalk &c. Pains in the head and various parts of the body, with various hysterical affections. In this state of the system, we see every organ performing its office with difficulty, or the functions of many entirely suspended, and often we find the uterus, among the last, resigning its healthy office.

The Catamenial Flux is interrupted or suppressed by fever, by whatever cause induced, as well as debility. When this occurs, there are all the diagnostics of the presence of fever at any other time, as increased frequency, fulness and tension of the pulse, a dry skin, thirst, hurried respiration, constipation of the bowels, with pain in the head, back and uterus. Though all these symptoms are not always present, yet there is a sufficient number of them attending to prove the real and genuine character of fever. Further, it may at all times be observed that the fever makes its appearance first; which circumstance is sufficient to testify that the fever is the



original disease. For we frequently discover the inconveniences, resulting from the interruption of the Catamenia, such as pain in the back, head &c. Among the East Gynectome we are witnesses of, after the commencement of the original disease. We may account for its operation by referring to the general law of the animal economy, by which we are sensible that a certain action of the activities is necessary for the healthy performance of every function in the system; so too high or too low action will interrupt the process, necessary to health. On the contrary it has been maintained by authors that the suppression of the Catamenia produces the fever, and that in consequence of the suppression there have occurred hemorrhages from different parts of the body, as the nose, lungs, stomach, and hemorrhoidal vessels, and that these hemorrhages observe a periodical recurrence.

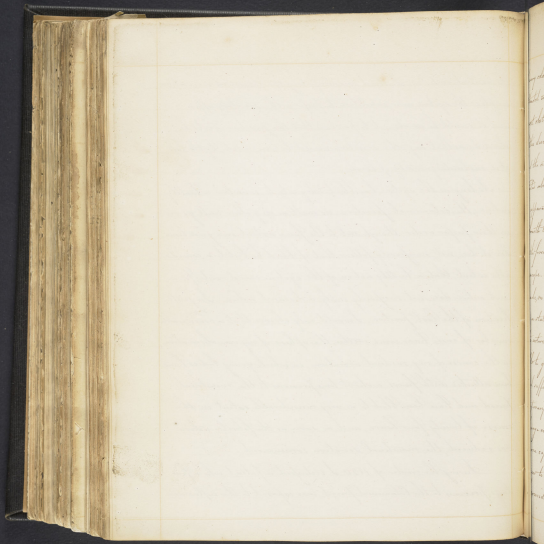
These hemorrhages we find only appear in habits extremely debilitated, or such as labour under febrile affections. In which cases we find many of the other functions of the system impaired before the irregularities of the Catamenia are manifested. Very few arguments are necessary to refute the idea that the suppression of the Catamenia produces fever. In the first place, if we relieve the system of the fever by the remedies adapted thereto, viz. Blood letting, using



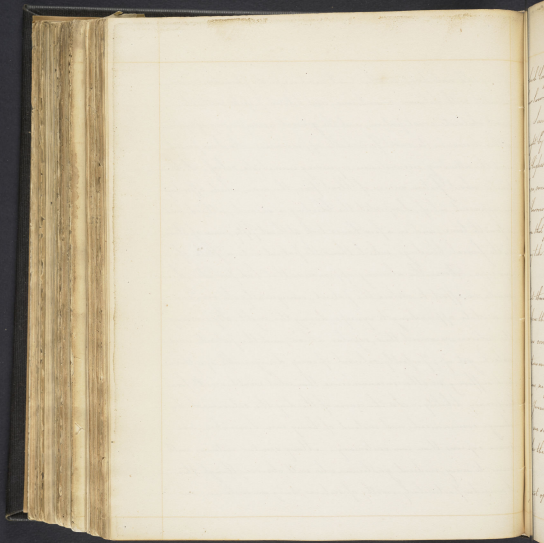
the menstrual walk to: Instead of anticipating the catamenial evacuation,
we place the system in a condition to perform this secretory office;
and it would be as absurd to presume that this secretion would be
aborted, as that any other secretion would be suspended, by the loss
of a moderate quantity of blood.

As long as the system has blood adequate to maintain a healthy
action, the catamenial secretion, as well as any other will go on
in their proper order, though not to the same extent in a given time.
For it does not necessarily follow, that if blood be lost to a consider-
able extent, that a healthy action of the system cannot exist; for a
weak action does not necessarily imply a diseased action. In justi-
fication of the last position, I would only observe that a considerable
number of cases have come within the sphere of my own observation,
in the course of my medical avocations, in which young ladies have
been attacked with Fever a short time previous to the menstrual
period and have been bled to a very considerable extent in the
course of twenty four hours, and as soon as the febrile action
was reduced, the menstrual secretion commenced.

During the winter of 1820 I visited a patient who a few
days previous to the catamenial period was exposed to the influence



of very cold and damp weather. A most desperate phrenitis ensued,
attended with delirium, convulsions, and dilated pupils with the
most obstinate constipation, and the general accompanying symptoms
of this disease in its most formidable appearance. As I saw present
and the attending circumstances requiring immediate relief, I de-
termined about fifteen ounces of blood from the arm, which affording
no apparent relief, I repeated the bleeding a second, third and
a fourth time, and in a few hours took at least fifty ounces of blood
in the several bleedings, which threw the patient into a state of
syncope. From the alarming appearances that had preceded, I
made no effort to restore the patient, consequently she remained
in a state approaching to syncope, during the night. By morning
the arteries recovered their regular action, and the patient was
able to get up; perfectly relieved of every disagreeable symptom,
and suffering no other inconvenience than what would result from
temporary debility. In the course of the day the catamenial dis-
charge commenced, and instead of being even diminished, was
more copious than was customary. Many similar instances will
occur to every medical gentleman who will observe; though this
I consider particularly worthy of notice, being an instance, in

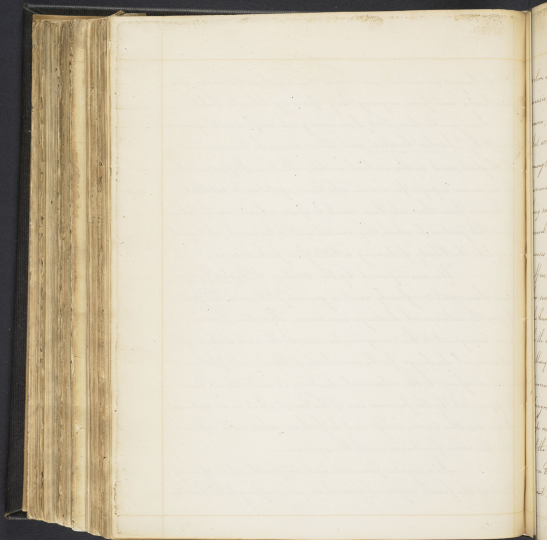


which larger evacuations were made than usual in the course of a few hours and from a young Lady of a very delicate Habit.

I am sensible how that I am coming into conflict with opinions taught by Doctor Cullen and others, men who have acquired the highest rank in the medical world. But as I apprehend it, by no means improper for a man who has a reputation to establish, to borrow from those who have, much to spare, when it can be taken from that portion, to which they are not entitled by merit; I hope I may take the liberty of deriving a little from such sources.

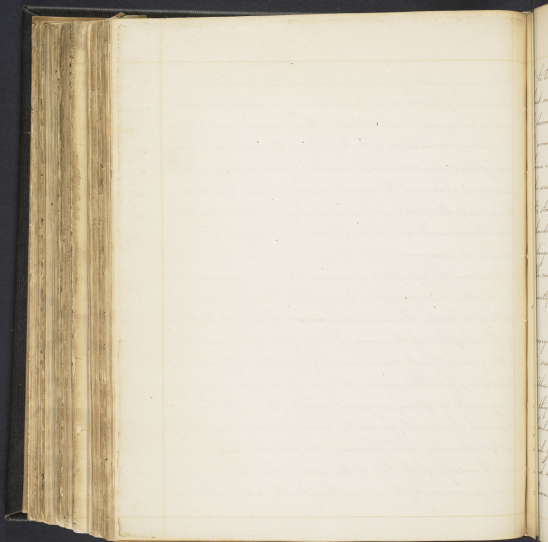
We are informed by the Writings of Doctor Cullen that there must necessarily exist a general Plethora in the System, before the catamenial discharge can occur. The idea, however, was consequent to his misapprehension with the real nature of the catamenial discharge, for he considered it blood. If Plethora were necessary to the catamenial discharge it would not all times be prevented by the previous use of the Lament; but in no instance do we see this occur, unless used to push an extent as to influence also the other Functionaries of the system.

As a regular formation and reciprocal action of every part of the female organs of generation are necessary to the healthly



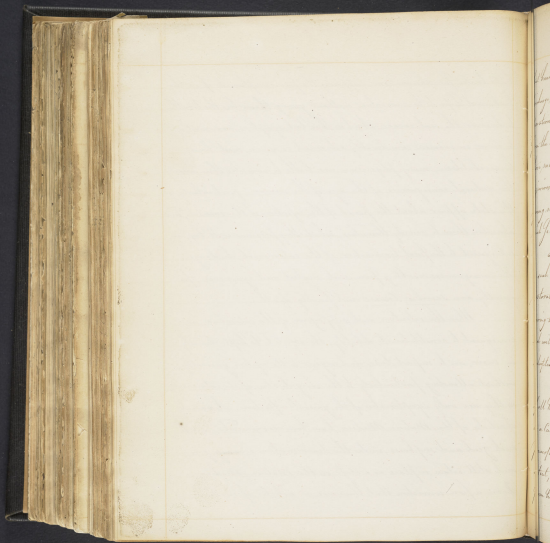
action and function of each individual part, the retention of the menses may be consequent to an absence or impaction of the ovum, or any other natural part. There is much reason to believe that some circumstances of the kind frequently occur, and are among the many reasons that may be assigned to account for the permanent absence of the menses in many women, and their being incapable of impregnation, during life. It is certain that several instances have occurred of permanent suppression of the menses, in consequence of the loss of a part of these organs.

If we may be permitted to reason analogically, we may account for most instances of original insensibility of impregnation, in the human female. For we are daily witness of the effects produced by the extirpation of the ovum, of many of the inferior animals, & many constitutional diseases are daily presenting to physicians, proceeding from their very occult causes; producing a variety of disagreeable symptoms; as general debility, pains in the back, hips and arms, with various hysterical affections and irregularities of the catamenia; which physicians either from a deficiency of science or a knowledge of the laws of the economy of the genital organs, treat as common hysteria; and several instances I have known



to be treated for rheumatism, supposing the pain complained of in the
back and hips to be muscular, without giving themselves the trouble
to discover the real cause. And as these last symptoms are most apt
to occur in women considerably advanced in years, and have
borne children, many physicians are liable to consider them merely
the natural consequences of the age of the woman, particularly if
this state appears about the period of the cessation of the menses, and
abandon them to remedy themselves, which they presume will happen
subsequent to the final termination of the catamenial discharge.
The consequences resulting from such neglect and ignorance, fre-
quently are scorbutus, Cancer and finally death.

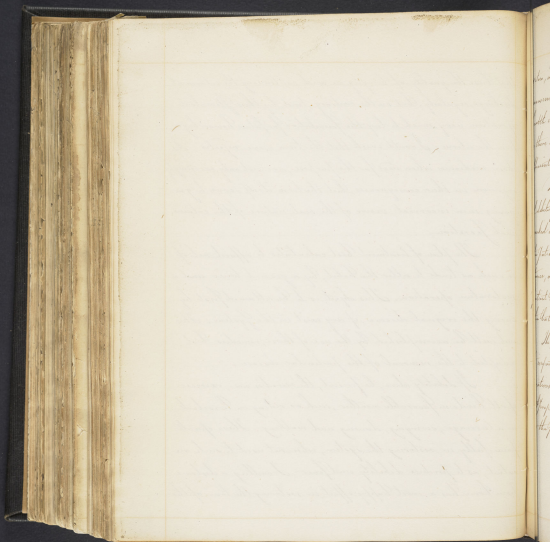
When the retention and suppression of the catamenia are
consequent to constitutional debility, the objects to be kept chiefly
in view, are to impart tone and vigour to the system generally,
without attending particularly to the irregularities of the catamenia,
as they are only symptomatic of the general affection. A variety
of articles of the Materia Medica have been recommended, with
much zeal and success, under the denomination emmenagogues,
and still retain a place as a class in the Materia Medica.
From a firm conviction that there are no articles of medicine,



that have the quality of bringing on and continuing the catamenial discharge regularly, but on the contrary, tend by their stimulant operation very much to lay the foundation for future hemorrhages, from the uterus; I could wish that the term were rejected. As these medicines when used for the purpose, are not only exceedingly injurious in their consequences, but the term itself serves to give young men incorrect views of the real nature of the catamenial generation.

The plan of treatment best calculated to afford relief, is such as tends to alter the Habit by a general tonic and a restorative operation. This object is to be attained first by curing the original disease, if any exist in the system. This end will be accomplished by the use of those remedies best adapted to the removal of the particular disease.

If debility alone be present, the remedies are, exercise of all kinds in favorable weather, such as riding on horseback, in a carriage, swinging, dancing and walking. These operate powerfully in restoring the system, when not used to such an extent, as to produce debility and fear. Travelling a distance from home has a most happy effect in restoring the tone of the



system, as there are in addition to the exercise, many sources of amusement. When the circumstances and state of the patient's health will justify these advantages, they should not be omitted, as there are no articles of the Materia Medica, perhaps more efficacious than the plan, in the accomplishment of our object.

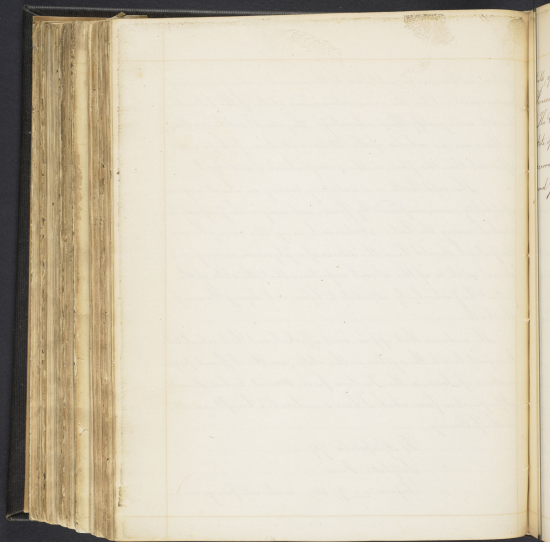
The cold bath is a salutary remedy in almost any case of debility, unaccompanied by fever, and may with propriety be ranked among the best. Anterior to using this remedy however, the patient should have the advice of a physician in every instance, as it is of the utmost importance that the state of the patient be particularly attended to before and during the use of the bath.

The medicines that appear most effectual, and best calculated to support tone to the system in this state, are the different preparations of Iron, as the Tinctura Ferri, Martis, Carbon, Ferric. A preparation from which I have seen decided benefit result, is the following

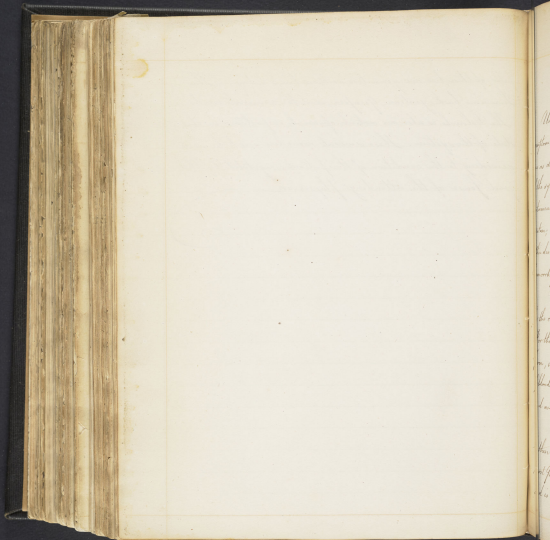
Rf. *Apopatida* ʒij

Sulphatis Ferri

Saponis aa ʒij M. made into fine grain



fulle, of these two are given two or three times a day. The
Peruvian Bark, gentian, Quassia, and the mineral acids.
The Colic is also our article of much importance in this
state of the system. These several remedies are to be used
according to the condition of the Patient, regulated by the
good sense of the attending Physician.



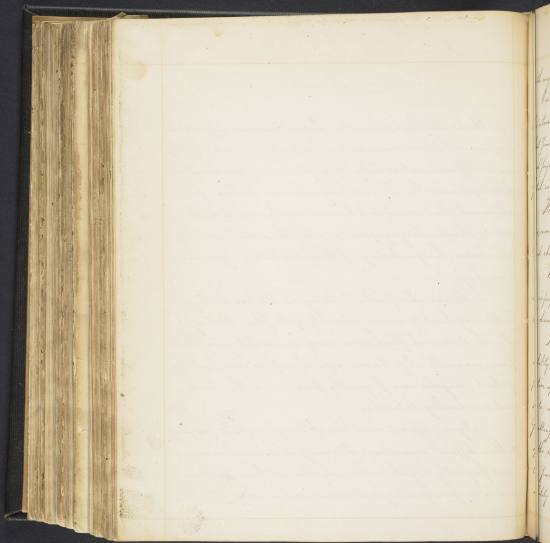
Menorrhagia
or
Immoderate Menstruation

Section Second.

Under this head, the writers on the Catamenia confound the symptom with uterine hemorrhage. These two conditions of the system are as different and as distinctly marked as any two variations of the system can be. The first being a diseased discharge of the catamenial fluid, consequent to some irregular action in the system; therefore only symptomatic; while the second is an idiopathic disease, being a discharge of blood constituting a genuine hemorrhage.

We are able further to distinguish the two discharges by the coagulability or incoagulability of the fluid discharged. For the catamenial fluid comes away as secreted, in a fluid form, invariably. On the contrary, where there is a discharge of blood, coagula very frequently form, even in the uterus, and are discharged in clots.

Again, different conditions of the system appear necessary to these different evacuations. For excessive menstruation occurs most frequently in girls, or those who have not borne children, and is excessive from long continuance, and is never attended



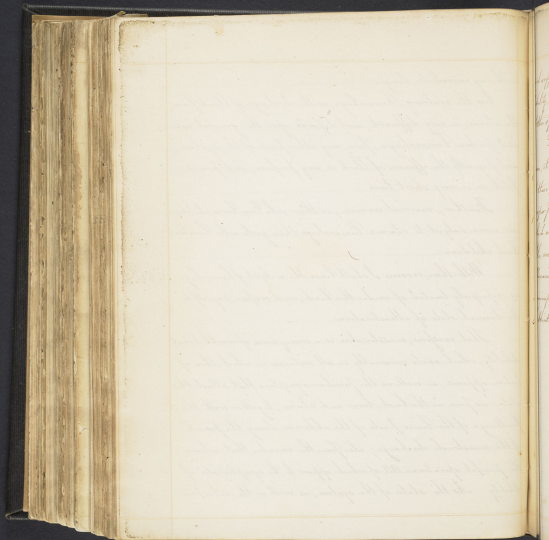
with any immediate danger.

On the contrary, Hemorrhage, or the discharge of blood from the uterus, is very different, and depends upon the general causes that produce Hemorrhages, from any other part of the system, and frequently the effusion of blood is very profuse, and proves fatal in a very short time.

Further, married women, or those who have borne children, are more subject to uterine Hemorrhage than girls who have not had children.

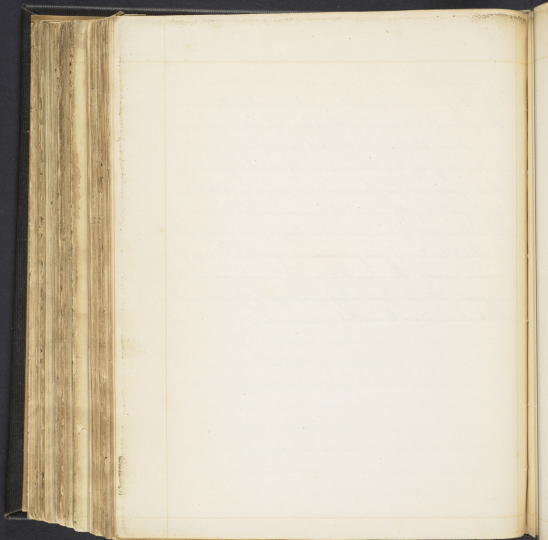
With these reasons I shall leave the subject of hemorrhage, as improperly treated of under this head, and confine myself to the diseased state of amenstruation.

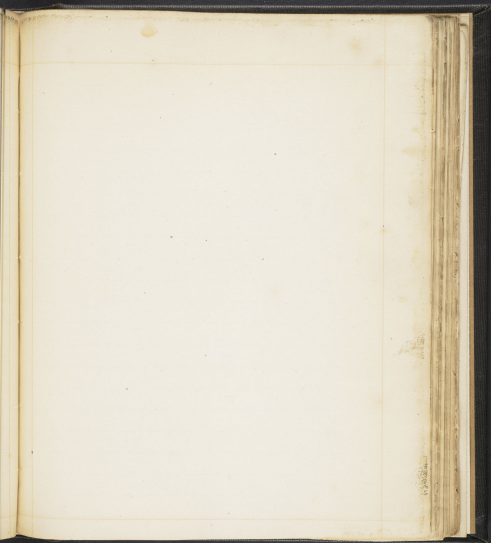
That excessive menstruation is a consequence of constitutional debility, which exists invariably in all instances in which this affection appears, as well as the peculiar symptoms that attend this state; as pain in the back, loins and uterus, together with the swellings of the lower parts of the abdomen during the period of the menstrual discharge; also from the remedies that relieve the painful operations. All of which appear to be symptomatic of debility. As this state of the system, as well as the retention

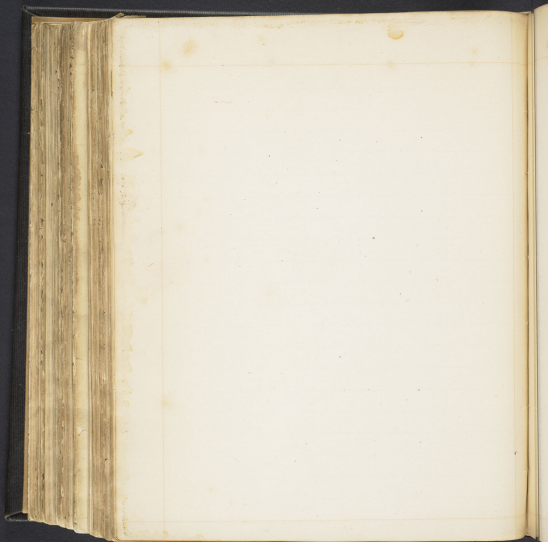


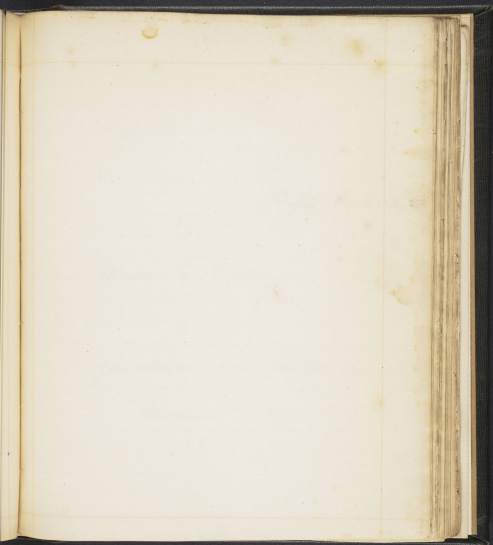
and suppression of the menses, depends upon the constitutional debility, the same general remedies are to be used in this state of the system, that are used in those two different stages.

During the period of the discharge, as there is considerable pain, it is necessary to administer some gently stimulating medicines. Of these, Opium and Camphor, or what is perhaps much better, proper proportions of Opium and Spemanacka in combination, which will in most instances answer our purpose exceedingly well. The volatile tincture of gum guaiacum is reported to be a very efficacious remedy. The warm bath, in that form denominated semicupium will also afford relief in a majority of cases, and I think should never be omitted.









D^r James